

VI. SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

The City of Long Beach encompasses about 50 square miles. Approximately one-third (15 square miles) of the City is within a HUD defined low/moderate income target zone. The City's Neighborhood Services Bureau works to improve living environments within the target zone, but focuses on the most distressed areas through the Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (NIS) program.

Neighborhood Improvement Strategy

The ***Neighborhood Improvement Strategy*** (NIS) concentrates resources and tailors services to meet the needs of ten neighborhoods. NIS coordinators lead and direct multi-disciplinary teams assigned to each area and work with residents to solve neighborhood problems. Some participating team members include representatives from: Parks, Recreation and Marine; Integrated Resources; Public Works; Police; Fire; Gang Prevention; Code Enforcement; Library Services; Health Department; and local schools. This multi-disciplinary approach increases the City's coordinated response, leading to a comprehensive and seamless approach to neighborhood problem solving. Department representatives attend monthly meetings in each of the areas to assist residents in the identification and resolution of their problems. These meetings serve as informational workshops and a location for neighborhood dialogue. All property improvement and residential rehabilitation programs are marketed at the meetings. These materials as well as the meetings themselves are translated for non-English speaking/reading residents.

Access to services in the cultural language of the community is a key to the NIS approach. Bi-cultural and bilingual liaisons are deployed to serve as culturally specific communication conduits to the community. NIS attention to culture and language, particularly in diverse Long Beach, has developed trust and collaboration among residents.

NIS coordinators work to build the capacity of the community for sustainable, independent governance of the neighborhood improvement process. Efforts to increase community ownership and responsibility sharing are achieved through development of neighborhood committees. Residents and community associations are provided technical assistance to organize as a cohesive group to advocate for themselves and bring a positive change to the community. This process is established in each NIS area as a means of providing a venue for local volunteers to participate in the planning and implementation of community improvement projects. The final desired outcome of NIS is to develop and foster independent governing entities that are representative of their neighborhoods and are capable of addressing neighborhood problems.

NIS meetings also provide regular forums for citizen participation in the development of the City's Action Plan. Solutions for neighborhood issues have resulted in the development of new CDBG programs and services.

Neighborhood Leadership Program

Begun in 1992, the nationally recognized Neighborhood Leadership Program (NLP) is a collaborative effort with The City of Long Beach, Department of Community Development **Neighborhood Services Bureau** and **The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)** - a non-profit human relations organization. Participants are primarily drawn from Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (NIS) in Long Beach. NLP brings together a diverse group of dedicated neighborhood residents to participate in a 6-month experience that facilitates the enhancement of communication skills, conflict resolution, leadership and human relations' skills. Additionally, NLP participants enhance their knowledge about their community and the network of services available to them. The program design and curriculum provide an opportunity for participants to strengthen their linkages between the city, schools, businesses, parents, families, and neighborhoods.

One major component of the curriculum is the development and completion of a neighborhood improvement project. Participant groups can receive mini-grants up to \$1,000 for their project. The goal is to leverage neighborhood resources, resident participation, solve a neighborhood issue and learn how to write a formal grant application. During the 2002 – 2003 Program Year 37 participants successfully completed the program. Eight community projects were developed and completed within the period of six months. Some of their projects include: the creation of Youth and Police Community Forum, Neighborhood Tree Planting, Health and Safety Faire, Neighborhood Clean-up, Service Directory and Literacy Program.

Neighborhood Development Center

Another resource for the community is a neighborhood development center called the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC). The facility provides resources and assistance to neighborhood residents and associations to help them to improve their neighborhoods. Neighborhood groups have use of a community meeting room and can make free photocopies to make newsletters and flyers to announce their meetings and events. Neighborhood groups can also borrow supplies for a block party, neighborhood events and alley stenciling as well as publications on a variety of subjects including property management, crime prevention, and urban forestry. The NRC hosts free workshops for the community on a variety of topics including code enforcement, and effective property management seminar series. Grant proposal workshops and technical assistance are also provided to assist neighborhood groups to leverage neighborhood improvement funds from multiple sources. Some of the NRC's accomplishments during the 2002 – 2003 Program Year include:

- Assisted 592 neighborhood and community associations
- Provided free meeting space for 260 community meetings by 177 neighborhood groups
- Hosted 71 workshop and community events for 1,628 residents
- Produced over one million photocopies for the community including 138,305 neighborhood newsletters

By fostering community participation and providing access to resources, the Neighborhood Development Center enhances the expansion of leadership skills in the community.

Community Recognition

The City participates in National Community Development Week by hosting a luncheon to honor organizations and individuals that provided outstanding service to the community. On April 22, 2003, the Community Development Advisory Commission honored 6 individuals and 4 groups for their work. The following is a list of the awardees and the Category of award:

| Category | Awardees | | |
|--|---|--------------------|---|
| <i>Individual Achievement</i> | George Ghiotto | | |
| <i>Community Service</i> | The Lara Family | Jose Flores | Tom Flores |
| <i>Outstanding Neighborhood Project</i> | Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association | | Willmore City Heritage Association |
| <i>Business Partner</i> | Snugtop | | |
| <i>Partnership Achievement</i> | Habitat For Humanity, South Bay – Long Beach | | |
| <i>Stamp Out Graffiti</i> | Jose Cortez | | |
| <i>David Landry Community Service Memorial Award</i> | Faith Palermo | | |

Neighborhood Clean Up Assistance Program

One of the National Objectives of the Community Development Block Grant Program is to aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. To this extent the Neighborhood Clean-up Assistance Program provides materials and supplies to community organizations and volunteer groups who want to clean up their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Services Bureau supplies the paint and paint supplies, brooms, shovels, rakes, gloves, trash bags including industrial-sized dumpsters to remove debris from sidewalks and streets, and large items dumped into alleys and vacant lots. The program is available citywide to any groups wanting to beautify their neighborhoods. Long Beach is fortunate in having so many volunteers who have used this program successfully. In the 2002 – 2003 Program Year 166 clean-up events were held, and 213 dumpsters were filled, equaling to over 1,704 tons of debris that were removed from Long Beach streets and neighborhoods.